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to the United States and to prevent trespasses on and otherwise regulate the protection, use, occupancy, and administration of the National Grasslands and all other lands administered by the Forest Service under the provisions of title III of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act insofar as is practical and consistent with said act: *Provided*, That Forest Service officers may continue under delegated authority to acquire lands, to make exchanges, to grant easements and enter into leases, permits, agreements, contracts and memoranda of understanding involving such lands under such terms and conditions and for such consideration, fees or rentals as authorized by title III of the said Act.

(b) Existing valid rights, reservations easements, leases, permits, agreements, contracts and memoranda of understanding affecting these lands shall continue in full force and effect so long as they remain valid in accordance with the terms thereof.

[27 FR 9217, Sept. 18, 1962]

§ 213.4 Prior rules and regulations superseded.

Except as provided in § 213.3, the rules and regulations heretofore issued for the land utilization projects are hereby superseded as to all such projects administered by the Forest Service, but not as to such project lands administered by other agencies.

[27 FR 9217, Sept. 18, 1962]

PART 215—NOTICE, COMMENT, AND APPEAL PROCEDURES FOR NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

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AUTHORITY: 16 U.S.C. 472, 551; sec. 322, Pub. L. 102-381, 106 Stat. 1419 (16 U.S.C. 1612 note).

SOURCE: 58 FR 58910, Nov. 4, 1993, unless otherwise noted.

§ 215.1 Purpose and scope.

(a) *Purpose*. The rules of this part have two purposes. First, this part establishes a process by which persons or organizations may receive notice and be provided opportunity to comment on proposed actions implementing national forest land and resource management plans prior to a final decision by the responsible official. This includes notice of and opportunity to comment on nonsignificant amendments of land and resource management plans that are made in conjunction with those proposed actions. Second, this part provides for prompt administrative review of project and activities implementing forest plans and establishes who may appeal decisions on planned actions, the kind of decisions that may be appealed, the responsibilities of the participants in an appeal, and the procedures that apply.

(b) *Scope*. The process established in this part constitutes the final administrative opportunity for the public to influence National Forest System project decisionmaking prior to implementation. The rules of this part complement, but do not replace, numerous other opportunities to participate in and influence agency decisionmaking provided pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the National Forest Management Act, and the implementing regulations and procedures in 40 CFR parts 1500-1508 and 36 CFR parts 216 and 219, Forest Service Manual Chapters 1920 and 1950, and Forest Service Handbooks 1909.12 and 1909.15.

§ 215.2 Definitions.

For the purpose of this part—

Appeal is the written document filed with an Appeal Deciding Officer by one who objects to a decision covered by this part.

Appeal Deciding Officer is the Forest Service line officer having the delegated authority and responsible to render a decision on an appeal filed under this part.

Appeal Period is the 45 calendar-day period during which an appeal may be filed with the Appeal Deciding Officer.

Appeal Record is the information assembled and/or created during the course of an appeal and upon which review of an appeal is conducted. It consists of the decision documentation, the appeal, the Responsible Official's documentation of the informal disposition meeting, the public notice of decision document, and written comments submitted by interested parties.

Appeal Reviewing Officer is an agency official who reviews an appeal and makes a written recommendation to the Appeal Deciding Officer on the disposition of the appeal.

Appellant is a person or organization filing an appeal under this part.

Categorical Exclusion refers to a category of actions which do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment and for which neither an environmental impact statement (EIS) nor an environmental assessment (EA) is required (40 CFR 1508.4; Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Chapter 30).

Comment Period is the 30 calendar day period, following publication of the notice for public comment, available to interested persons to provide comments to a Responsible Official on a proposed action subject to this part.

Decision Document is the document that records the decisions for actions implementing land and resource management plans. (See also, Record of Decision, Decision Notice, and Decision Memo.)

Decision documentation refers to the decision document and all relevant environmental and other analysis documentation and records on which the Responsible Official based a decision that is at issue under an appeal filed pursuant to this part. Decision documentation may include, but is not limited to, a project or case file, Record of

Decision, Decision Notice, Decision Memo, environmental assessment, finding of no significant impact, draft and final environmental impact statement, land and resource management plan, regional guide, and documents incorporated by reference in any of the preceding documents.

Decision Memo is a concise written record of a Responsible Official's decision to implement actions that have been categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment (40 CFR 1508.4, Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Chapter 30).

Decision Notice is a concise written record of a Responsible Official's decision based on an environmental assessment and a finding of no significant impact. (40 CFR 1508.9, Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Chapter 40).

Environmental Assessment is a concise public document that provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact (40 CFR 1508.9; Forest Service Handbook (FSH), 1909.15, Chapter 40).

Environmental Impact Statement is a detailed written statement as required by section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (40 CFR 1508.11; FSH 1909.15, Chapter 20).

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is a document prepared by a federal agency presenting the reasons why an action, not otherwise excluded, will not have a significant effect on the human environment and for which an environmental impact statement, therefore, will not be prepared. It includes the environmental assessment or a summary of it and shall note any other environmental documents related to it (40 CFR 1508.13; Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Chapter 40).

Forest Service line officer is a Forest Service official who serves in a direct line of command from the Chief and who has the delegated authority to make and execute decisions subject to this part. Specifically, for the purposes of this part, a Forest Service employee who holds one of the following offices and titles: District Ranger, Deputy Forest Supervisor, Forest Supervisor, Deputy Regional Forester, Regional

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Forester, Associate Deputy Chief, Deputy Chief, Associate Chief of the Forest Service, or an employee delegated the authority to act in one of these capacities.

Interested Party is a person or organization other than the appellant that provides written information to the Appeal Reviewing Officer regarding an appeal.

Proposed action is a proposal made by the Forest Service to authorize, recommend, or implement an action on National Forest System lands to meet a specific purpose and need which is subject to the notice and comment provisions of this part.

Proposed Timber Harvest Categorically Excluded from Documentation under Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, section 31.2, paragraph 4 is timber harvest which removes 250,000 board feet or less of merchantable wood products, or salvage which removes 1,000,000 board feet or less of merchantable wood products; which requires one mile or less of low standard road construction (Service level D. FSH 7709.56); and assures regeneration of harvested or salvaged areas, where required; which normally are categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement; and for which a project or case file and decision memo are required (Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, sec. 31.2, para. 4).

Record of Decision is a document signed by a Responsible Official recording a decision that was preceded by preparation of an environmental impact statement (40 CFR 1505.2; Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Chapter 20).

Responsible Official is the Forest Service line officer who has the authority and responsibility to make decisions on proposed actions subject to notice, comment and appeal under this part.

§215.3 Proposed actions subject to notice and comment.

The notice and comment procedures of §215.5 apply only to the following actions:

(a) Proposed actions implementing national forest land and resource management plans (36 CFR 219.11) for which

an environmental assessment is prepared.

(b) Proposed timber harvest as described in Paragraph 4, section 31.2 of Forest Service Handbook 1905.15 for which a project or case file and Decision Memo are required.

(c) Nonsignificant amendments (36 CFR part 219) to land and resource management plans that are included as part of a decision on a proposed action as specified in paragraph (a) of this section.

(d) Proposed actions on those National Forests which do not yet have approved land and resource management plans prepared pursuant to 36 CFR part 219 as follows:

(1) Proposed actions for which an environmental assessment is prepared; or

(2) Proposed timber harvest as described in Paragraph 4, section 31.2 of Forest Service Handbook 1905.15 for which a project or case file and Decision Memo are required.

(e) Proposed forestry research activities to be conducted on National Forest Systems lands for which an environmental assessment has been prepared.

§215.4 Actions not subject to notice and comment.

The following proposed actions are not subject to notice and comment procedures of §215.5

(a) Actions described in a draft environmental impact statement, for which notice and comment procedures are governed by 40 CFR parts 1500–1508;

(b) Actions categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment pursuant to 7 CFR 1b.3 or FSH 1909.15, sections 31.1 and 31.2, except timber harvest actions as specified in §215.3(b) and (d)(2);

(c) Any action or policy not subject to the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act and the implementing regulations at 40 CFR parts 1500–1508;

(d) Rules promulgated in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. 551 et seq.) or policies and procedures issued in Forest Service Manuals and Handbooks (36 CFR parts 200, 216);

(e) A nonsignificant amendment to a land and resource management plan